

LESSON 21

Jesus Feeds the Multitude

JOHN 6:1-15



— BIBLE TRUTH —

THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST IS SUFFICIENT TO FEED ALL

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read John 6:1–15 from the Scriptures or read story 99, “Jesus Feeds the Multitude,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Silencing the Critics

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ five sandwich rolls (hot dog buns will work)

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

The Story of the Manna

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

7. ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Color a Picture

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- ✓ white paper

8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 10 MIN

God’s Sovereignty and Man’s Responsibility

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

TOTAL 65 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Crowds gathered to see Jesus’ miracles—Massive crowds gathered as Jesus traveled with his disciples, teaching the people and healing their sick and demon-possessed. All wanted to catch a glimpse of this amazing man who could open blind eyes and restore crippled legs (Matthew 14:14). In Luke’s gospel, we read that the disciples had just returned from being sent out by Jesus to preach and heal (Luke 9:6, 10). Attracted by his miracles but unaware of who he really was, people came in droves to see Jesus for themselves. Jesus had compassion on them for he saw them as “sheep without a shepherd” (Mark 6:34).

Jesus revealed his creation power—After a long day of teaching about the kingdom and healing those who were sick, it was time for supper. The disciples encouraged Jesus to send the crowd away (Luke 9:12). To test them and demonstrate his power, Jesus told the disciples to give the people something to eat. But all they had were a few fishes and loaves. Jesus sat the people down. Then, demonstrating his power as creator, he multiplied the fish and loaves. The details of how this was done or what it looked like are not given to us. But we can be sure of this: Jesus created enough food out of those fish and bread for twelve basketfuls of leftovers to be collected! This miracle is found in all four gospels.

The crowd sought to appoint Jesus king—After multiplying the fishes and loaves, the people wanted to make Jesus their king. They wanted him to feed them and to use his powers against their Roman oppressors. They didn’t want to worship Jesus, nor did they understand he came to deliver them from a greater enemy. The Jews assumed God’s promised king would reign on David’s earthly throne, liberating Jerusalem and the surrounding lands of Israel. The crowd was prepared to force Jesus to be their king. But Jesus would not be forced to do anything. He was already King of kings, ruling over heaven and earth. His mission was far more important than just overthrowing Rome; Jesus came to overthrow the dominion of sin and death for all who would believe.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Dried Fish and Barley Loaves

Dried fish was a common staple food in Jesus’ day. Fish were dried to preserve them. The little boy in the story had barley loaves, which were less expensive bread than wheat loaves. This small amount was enough for a boy, but not even enough for a grown man. Yet Jesus used this small amount to feed thousands.

Where Is the Gospel? _____

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

In John 6:35 Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." Jesus' providing food for the five thousand is a picture of a greater salvation he would bring. He is not just the multiplier of the fish and the loaves. He himself is the Bread of Life. John 6:40 continues, "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

The disciples, with but a few loaves and fish, could not feed the thousands gathered. What an apt picture of our inability to save ourselves. But if we turn to Jesus, he has the power to supply what we need. Just as Jesus multiplied the fish and the loaves to feed the multitude, so today he offers us himself.

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read John 6:1–15 from the Scriptures or read story 99, "Jesus Feeds the Multitude," from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Silencing the Critics

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ five sandwich rolls (hot dog buns will work)

Explain to the class that some critics who do not believe in miracles have suggested that the bread was really not multiplied but simply broken up into very small pieces and passed out. Start breaking up the loaves to show just how small a portion that would mean a person would receive. By breaking one of the loaves in half, then breaking one of the pieces in half and doing this ten times to one of the remaining halves, you would end up with a piece that is the equivalent of one five-thousandth of the total. Show this tiny piece to the class and ask them if they think this is what filled each of the five thousand men. Then ask them what part of the story proves that Jesus really did multiply the fishes and loaves. The answer, of course, is that the leftovers filled twelve baskets.

This miracle is recorded in all four Gospels, which agree that Jesus performed the miracle. Overall, that is very convincing evidence.

TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

The Story of the Manna

Read the story of the feeding of the five thousand, and then read the story of God providing manna from Exodus 16. After you have read both stories, read John 6:32–33 and ask the students the following questions:

- What do both the manna and the multiplication of bread point to?
(Both point to God's provision of salvation through Jesus.)

- Why is Jesus like bread?
(Bread satisfies your natural hunger and keeps you alive. Jesus satisfies our spiritual hunger and gives us eternal life.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Color a Picture

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- ✓ white paper

Have the children draw their interpretation of the multiplication of the fishes and the loaves. For example, they could draw a picture of Jesus holding a giant loaf of bread (imagining that when Jesus multiplied the bread it grew to an enormous size). Or they might cover their paper with dozens of tiny fish and loaves (imagining that Jesus literally multiplied the food). Or they might draw a picture of Jesus adding more morsels of bread to existing piles of bread (imagining that Jesus kept breaking off pieces from a never-ending loaf of bread). As the children draw, remind them of the miracle-working power of Jesus and how he was no ordinary man.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's Scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 10 MIN

God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

Jesus as the "bread of life" (John 6:35–44), connects to the theme of our lesson today and is a wonderful blend of two important truths: God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Draw two columns on the board, one entitled "What God Does" and the other "What Man Does." Review the passage and write out the verses or portions of verses in the appropriate column. Soon the class will see the mystery in our coming to Christ.

The point here is not to settle an age-long dispute between the two. Let us be comfortable knowing that only those the Lord calls can come to him, while also believing that all those who come, freely come of their own desire.

Ask the class to explain how this passage in John relates to the story of Jesus multiplying the fishes and the loaves.